

# Focal Point



The Newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

March-April 2003



## Seven Strangers?

by Dr. Tony Phillips

At the dawn of the space age some 40 years ago, we always knew who was orbiting Earth or flying to the Moon. Neil Armstrong, Yuri Gagarin, John Glenn. They were household names--everywhere.

Lately it's different. Space flight has become more routine. Another flight of the shuttle. Another visit to the space station. Who's onboard this time? Unless you're a NASA employee or a serious space enthusiast, you might not know.

Dave Brown, Rick Husband, Laurel Clark, Kalpana Chawla, Michael Anderson, William McCool, and Ilan Ramon.

Now we know. Those are the names of the seven astronauts who were tragically lost on Saturday, Feb. 1st, when the space shuttle Columbia (STS-107) broke apart over

Texas.

Before the accident, perhaps, they were strangers to you. But if that's so, why did you have a knot in your gut when you heard the news? What were those tears all about? Why do you feel so deep-down sad for seven strangers?

Astronauts have an unaccountable hold on us. They are explorers. Curious, humorous, serious, daring, careful. Where they go, they go in peace. Every kid wants to be one. Astronauts are the essence of humanity. They are not strangers. They are us. While still in orbit Dave Brown asked, jokingly, "do we really have to come back?" No. But we wish you had.

### Note from the editor

By Gary Parson

NASA'S Space place is an educational division of NASA. They are supplying me with monthly inserts for our newsletter. I will be picking and choosing the article's for the FP. I felt because of the tragedy of Columbia it was only right to include this one.

Also I would like to remind all members if you change your email or physical addresses please contact myself and Lee Keith. You can contact Lee Keith at [leekeith1@juno.com](mailto:leekeith1@juno.com) and myself at [gparson@wi.rr.com](mailto:gparson@wi.rr.com). I can't emphasize enough how important it is to do this. Our records have to stay updated to not only save money for the club but also to save my sanity.

### HIGH SCHOOL AMATEUR ASTRONOMER CAMPAIGNS AGAINST LIGHT POLLUTION

Jennifer Barlow, a high school student in Midlothian, Virginia, USA, began National Dark Sky Week.

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(NDSW). NDSW for 2003 is set to occur from April 1 to 8, 10 pm to 12 am (Eastern and Mountain Time Zones) and 9 pm to 11 pm (Central and Pacific Time Zones.) The purpose of the event is to reduce and raise awareness about light pollution.

Light pollution is the lighting of the night sky that intervenes the light of the stars and astronomical observers. It is caused by light sources that emit excess light into the atmosphere and screen out astronomical features in the sky. Light pollution is a growing problem as more and more cities are being built and expanded while more lights are being used to light them. Robert Gent, President of the 20,000-member Astronomical League explains the effects of light pollution, "The beauty of our night skies has been inspirational to mankind for eons, and it is an important part of our heritage. The time has come to recognize the ill effects of light pollution. Better quality lighting can reduce glare, save energy, and protect the nighttime environment."

Many people have expressed their enthusiasm for National Dark Sky Week. Says 2002 National Young Astronomer Award Winner, Albert Lin, "Having a National Dark Sky Week would certainly please fellow dedicated astronomers as well as give the general public a chance to experience the night sky in all its glory, the way it should be. This would be a great opportunity to get people interested and involved in observing the night sky. From my experience, the main reason why more people aren't out under the stars is they can barely see anything from their location anyway. A NDSW would, in a sense, benefit everyone." National Dark Sky Week will allow many to see the universe and people will be able to forget about "earthly" distractions for two hours when they realize the scale of the vast universe.

"It is a great tragedy that each and every US citizen cannot walk out of their front door and be able to see the wonder of the Milky Way arcing across the night sky. This week long event is a great way to enjoy the night sky and bring the focus of public attention on this growing issue. Light should go where we want and need it, not up into the night sky where it serves no purpose except destroying one of our most awe-inspiring natural wonders," says Dr. Kevin Marvel, Deputy Executive Officer

of the American Astronomical Society, a cosponsor of National Dark Sky Week.

Jennifer Barlow stresses the importance of safety in this event. "Please" do not extinguish important lighting that is needed for safety, i.e., streetlights, busy parking lot lights, etc. Turn off outdoor house lights and bright indoor lights. When observing in a dark area, carry a red-tinted flashlight and stay with a large group of people," says Barlow.

The Astronomical League, The International Dark-Sky Association, The American Astronomical Society, The Richmond Astronomical Society, The Armagh Planetarium, support National Dark Sky Week, among many others. In order for NDSW to be successful, the participation of everyone is crucial. National Dark Sky Week is an opportunity for everyone to get involved in astronomy. Jennifer Barlow says, "The sky has been forgotten by many -- this is a good opportunity to remind us that Earth is not alone in the universe."

## **A Rare Stellar Eclipse**

By Gerry Samolyk

This spring we will have an opportunity to watch a relatively rare eclipse as the two stars in the binary system EE Cep will be in conjunction with our line of sight.

### **Background Information**

The star EE Cep normally shines around magnitude 10.7. When it was discovered to be much fainter on rare occasions, it was classified as an R Coronae Borealis type variable and placed on the AAVSO observing program.

For years, observers at the MAS observatory as well as others around the world monitored this star.

By the late 1970's, enough data was obtained to re-classify this star as an eclipsing binary system. Observers were informed not to include data on EE Cep in their long period variable reports.

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3 Our longtime observatory director, Ed Halbach, took a particular interest in this system and has lead a campaign to observe each eclipse since then. Although Ed is now making his 95<sup>th</sup> trip around the Sun, he is still active in astronomy and once again encouraging observers to follow the upcoming eclipse.

### The System

The current catalog lists EE Cep as an Algol type eclipsing system with an orbital period of 2049.53 days or about 5.6 years. The magnitude range is listed at 10.72 to 12.15. This is a B type star so it's large, hot, and blue in color.

The prediction for the next mid-eclipse is in the middle of May. Since the eclipse lasts about 30 days, it will last the entire month. By obtaining a light curve that defines both the falling and rising legs, we can calculate the time of minimum light accurately. This defines the time when the two stars were in conjunction with the Earth and, along with earlier data, allows us to refine the orbital period of the star. This star is located at R.A. 22h 09m 23s and declination +55° 45' so it will be in the northeast early in the evening.

### The Observing Project

I encourage both visual and CCD observers to monitor this star from late Apr thru early June.

Visual observers should use the chart and comparison stars in this issue. Additional finder charts will be provided on our website under special projects. Please record your estimate of the brightness along with the date and time. I prefer that you use U.T. but if you are not familiar with that, use local time. Make sure you indicate what time you are using. I prefer that you do not report your observations in JD format. Also, do not report this data to the AAVSO. The current system will not accept observation of EB type stars. I will make sure that this data gets to the chair of the EB committee. You can report your observations to me at [Samolyk@ix.netcom.com](mailto:Samolyk@ix.netcom.com).

For CCD observers, refer to the image that was obtained in Dec. I will ask that anyone that is using the Tangney scope from late April thru early June

take an image of this field using the V filter. Save that image in the folder C:\EE Cep using a file name yymmddname where yy is the year (03), mm is the month, and dd is the date (UT), and name is your name or initials. If you do a long observing session you might want to get one image first thing in the evening and another right before you leave. When the eclipse is concluded, I will collect and process all of the images, and produce a light curve.

The results from both the visual and CCD observers will be reported in a future issue of this newsletter and will be posted on our website.

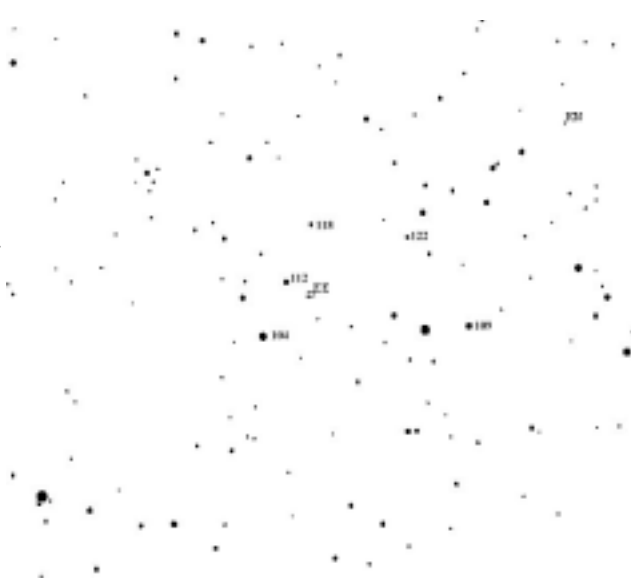
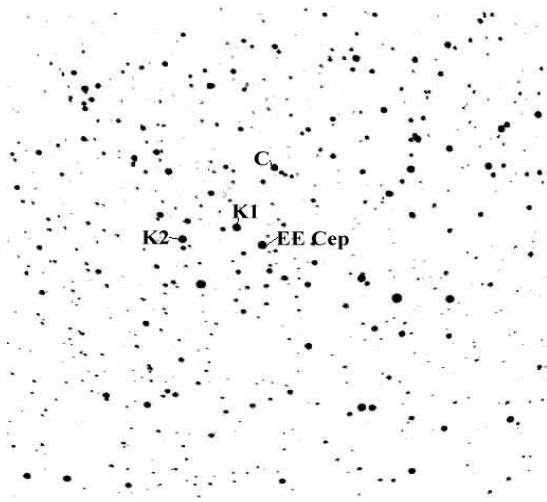
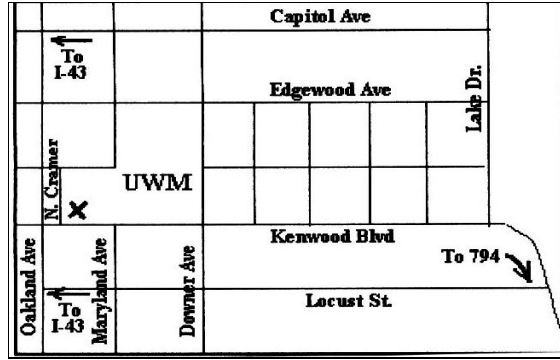


Chart of EE Cep for visual observers. The numbers to the right certain stars are magnitudes to be used for comparison. The decimal points are removed so they will not be confused with stars. Therefore the star labeled 112 is 11.2 magnitude.

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A  
 CCD image of the EE Cep field taken with the Tangney observatory. The star labeled C will be the comparison star while K1 and K2 will be the check stars. Make sure all of these stars are on any images you record.



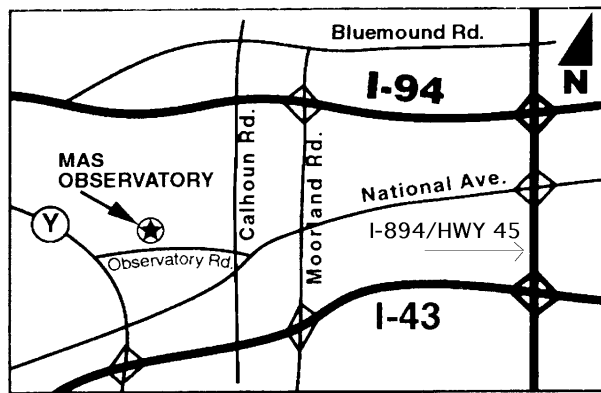
See map in next column

**Messier Hunt March 29th**

Our yearly Messier hunt will take place on March 29th. It will start at dusk and will go all through the night. If you plan to attend make sure you dress warm and have your thermos handy. You will be able to see just about all the messier objects that night and qualify for your Messier certificate.

**General Meetings**

The March 21st meeting will be held at the UWM physics building. The board meeting will start at 7:00pm and the general meeting will begin at 8:00pm. See map below.



**Notice!! Notice!!** The April meeting will not be on the third Friday of April it will be on April 11th so not to interfere with Good Friday The meeting will be held at the observatory.

**Elections will be held at the May meeting**

The yearly elections will be held at the May 16th meeting. Gerry Samoylk is again the nominating committee. The offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and one board member spot are open for nominations please contact Gerry by email if you are interested at: [samoylk@ix.netcom.com](mailto:samoylk@ix.netcom.com)

**Help!! We need a program chairman**

The club is in dire need of a program chairman. Your responsibilities would include finding speakers for our general meetings. The only real rule is that the speaker would talk about astronomy and astronomy related subjects. If you are interested please contact MAS President Scott Jamieson by email at [sjamiem16@aol.com](mailto:sjamiem16@aol.com) or by phone at 262-896-0119.

**Side note from the editor**

Our club needs more involvement by our membership. Please don't just sit back and think that the same old people will handle it. If this club is going to survive in the future more people have to get involved. Please consider getting more involved with this great organization.



## 2003 Open House Schedule

The 2003 open house tentative schedule will be:

April 25.....Saturn  
 May 9th.....Lunar Eclipses  
 May 23rd.....Jupiter

August 8th.....Persied Meteors  
 September 5th.....Moon  
 October 3rd.....Mars

## NCRAL Convention announced

By Lee Keith

The North Central Region of the Astronomical League will be having their convention in Sturgeon Bay WI on May 3rd 2003. Registration before March 31st is \$45.00 and \$55.00 after that. Accommodations are available at the Leathem Smith Lodge 1-800-DOORWIS or 1-920-743-5555. The email address is [thelodge@itol.com](mailto:thelodge@itol.com). Room rates start at \$78.00. Further information can be found at [www.doorastronomy.org/NCRAL2003.html](http://www.doorastronomy.org/NCRAL2003.html).

I have copies of the registration forms and maps to the lodge and general information. If anyone is interested I will send you copies. Contact me at [leekeith1@juno.com](mailto:leekeith1@juno.com) or 414-425-2331.

## New Spring Balance for Rudy

Long time MAS member Rudy Poklar sent this picture of his new spring balance for his dobsonian scope. He says it works so well that he is considering taking out his tape weights at the bottom of the scope and installing a heavier spring. If your interested in this invention contact Rudy at:

[rfpoklar@aol.com](mailto:rfpoklar@aol.com)



## New images from MAS members



MAS Member Steve Diesso got this great image of M92 a globular cluster in the constellation Hercules in the middle of January.



MAS President Scott Jamieson imaged the comet Neat 2002v1 on the 22nd of January. He decribed that he could see the coma in a pair of 11-80 binoculars. He went on to describe: "that the tail was very faint". If you look below the tail you will see a 14th magnitude galaxy for comparison. "My LX200 is an F10 and obviously the F6.3 would of captured a much longer and brighter tail".

## 6 MAS Officers/ Staff

<b>President</b>	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119
<b>Vice President</b>	Vern Hoag	262-548-9130
<b>Treasurer</b>	Chris Weber	262-789-7128
<b>Secretary</b>	Henry Gerner	414-774-9194
<b>Observatory Director</b>		
	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
<b>Assistant Observatory Director</b>		
	Paul Borchardt	262-781-0169
<b>Focal Point</b>	Gary Parson	262-895-3015

### Future MAS. Events

The March 21st meeting will be held at the UWM Physics building. The April 14th meeting will be at the observatory

**MAS Membership** is open to all with an interest in Astronomy and expanding their knowledge of the Universe. Yearly Membership Dues are:

Individual \$28/yr.; Family \$32; Non-resident (individual \$18, Family \$22); Student (under 18) \$12. For more information, contact Membership Chairman, Carlos Garces, 16430 Melody Drive, New Berlin, WI. 53151. Phone: **262-786-2623**. Email : **cgarces@wi.rr.com**

### Focal Point Publishing Guidelines

Focal Point Newsletter is published bi-monthly(Sep,Nov,Jan,Mar, May and July). Articles, Announcements, Graphics, Photos, Swap/Sale Ads etc. should be **submitted at least 10 days** prior to the first of the month (of the desired issue). Article inputs are preferred via email, Mail, or diskette in a text or Word compatible format. Submit FP inputs to:

**MAS Focal Point c/o Gary Parson  
7521 E Wind Lake Rd  
Wind Lake, WI 53185-1513**

## Keyholders list

### March

1	Tim Hoff	262-662-2212
8	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119
15	Lee Keith	414-425-2331
22	Dan Koehler	262-662-2987
29	Scott Laskowski	414-421-3517

### April

5	Gerry Samoylk	414-529-9051
12	Gary Parson	262-895-3015
19	Terry Ross	262-784-2093
26	Tom Schmidtkunz	414-352-1674

### May

3	Chris Weber	262-789-7128
10	Neil Simmons	262-889-2039
17	Dan Yanko	414-453-3382

### MAS Open House's

The open house schedule will be April 25, May 9, May 23, August 8, September 5, and October 3rd

### Loaner Telescopes (available to members for local use)

Lee Keith (Franklin)	414-425-2331	8" Dob reflector
Scott Jamieson (Waukesha)	262-896-0119	8" Dob reflector
Paul Borchardt (MAS site)	262-781-0169	6" Dob reflector
Chirs Weber(New Berlin)	262-789-7128	8" Dob reflector

**MAS Observatory 262-542-9071**

**MAS Web Page: [www.milwaukeeastro.org](http://www.milwaukeeastro.org)**

## **The Milwaukee Astronomical Society**

C/O Gary Parson  
7521 E Wind Lake Rd  
Wind Lake, WI 53185

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

*\*The Next MAS General and board meetings will be held on March 21st. And April 11th The board will meet at 7:00pm and the general meeting will be at 8:00pm at the UWM Physics building in March and at the observatory in April!!*

